

Jedediah Hotchkiss: Confederate Map Maker

By ARCHIE P. McDONALD

Jedediah Hotchkiss was born on November 30, 1828, near Windsor, Broome County, New York. A precocious child, he early showed a fondness for books and learning that was to mark his life. Following his graduation from Windsor Academy in 1846, he set out on a southern walking tour, spending one year as a tutor among the miners in northwestern Pennsylvania, then moving on to Virginia and a position as schoolmaster for the Forrer family children at Mossy Creek. With the backing of Samuel Forrer he was made Master of Mossy Creek Academy when it was established in 1852.

In 1859, Hotchkiss opened the Loch Willow Academy, near Staunton, Virginia, and operated it in partnership with his brother, Nelson

Hill Hotchkiss. When Virginia seceded from the Union, Nelson, more recently arrived from the north, was opposed to secession, and he remained a noncombatant and as aloof as possible from the war. But Jedediah, whose residence in and devotion to Virginia were much greater, was soon in the thick of the fight.

When the war was over, Hotchkiss returned to his home in Virginia and during the postwar years contributed to the recovery of the state. He engaged in the development of the western Virginia coal fields and railroads, and continued his interest in education. His services as a collector and publisher of Confederate military history were also noteworthy. He died on January 17, 1899.

TO Confederate soldiers in Virginia he was a familiar sight—one leg cast over the pommel of his saddle, a tall man bending over his sketch book and drawing curious lines on a scrap of paper. Glancing at hastily taken notes, he formed a map which accurately located features of the terrain, buildings, and troop positions. This was Jedediah Hotchkiss, Topographical Engineer of the Second Corps, Army of Northern Virginia. When his map was finished, it would be used by Gen. Thomas Jonathan (Stonewall) Jackson.

Hotchkiss was more than an engineer—being as well a companion to Jackson, courier, often a fighting soldier—but essentially he was an engineer and the best topographical engineer in the Confederate Army.* He was the man more responsible than any other for Jackson's ability to proceed in sure knowledge of the terrain. Throughout his youthful years, Hotchkiss had studied the geography and geology of the Pennsylvania and Virginia countrysides, and it was not long before he began to teach himself and practice the principles of topographical engineering and develop the skills that were to be of invaluable service to the Southern forces in Virginia during the Civil War. In the matter of maps, the Confederacy had to begin from scratch; the few maps they had were inaccurate and out-of-date.

FIRST DUTY

Hotchkiss reported to Lt. Col. Jonathan M. Heck at Rich Mountain in western Virginia on July 2, 1861. The first Federal thrust was rolling the Virginia forces back and Gen. Robert S. Garnett hurried to stop the

invasion. On July 3, Hotchkiss began his service by starting a survey of "Camp Garnett" and the vicinity preparatory to making a topographical map. Hotchkiss had almost completed his survey when the enemy arrived. He remained in the entrenchments during attacks on July 10 and 11. By then the situation was critical for the Confederates; the main force was separated from Camp Garnett by Rich Mountain. In order to re-establish communication it would be necessary to cross the mountain under enemy fire. At midnight on July 11, Col. John Pegram ordered Heck to assume command and to rejoin Garnett. Heck selected his engineer, Hotchkiss, to lead the march over the mountain.

The hurriedly formed column began its slow trek. After advancing some distance in the stillness a whistle brought the marchers to their knees. Hotchkiss managed a low reply, and they moved on. It was later learned that a Federal regiment had been stationed parallel to the line of march and only the whistled reply had enabled them to complete their escape. The summit of the mountain and the safety of the other slope were reached as the first streaks of dawn appeared. The light revealed that Hotchkiss led but fifty men instead of the larger column that had started out with him. It was later found that a courier from Pegram had been sent to halt the march but had traveled only as far as the rear of the column, when caution and the need for silence had prevented the order from being passed to the advance marchers. Only those men who had not received the order made it to safety.

In the hasty departure, Hotchkiss had been forced to leave behind his valuable engineering equipment. As soon as possible he filed a claim with the Confederate Government for "1 Barometer (Aneroid), 1 set of Mathematical instruments," and two sets of compass and chain for a total value of \$83.

Back in camp, Hotchkiss was made acting adjutant

*See also "Confederate Map Supply," by James L. Nichols [M.E. Jan.-Feb. 1954], and "Civil War Maps and Mapping," by James Berton Rhoads [M.E. Jan.-Feb. 1957].
The Hotchkiss Map Collection, which includes many of his papers and maps, compiled by Clara Egli LeGear, is in the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

but, when Gen. Robert E. Lee arrived to take command, he put Hotchkiss to work on a map of Tygart's Valley. By working strenuously Hotchkiss finished the map by early August. But the effort sapped his strength and he became easy prey for typhoid fever, and returned to his home to convalesce and to finish the map there. In October he was notified that he would receive the monthly pay of a lieutenant of engineers, \$93.33, for services to that date.

TOPOGRAPHICAL ENGINEER

By March 1862, Hotchkiss was again fit for duty, and when Governor John Letcher called out the militia of the Shenandoah Valley, Hotchkiss decided to return to the army if he could obtain engineering duty. He found that his prospects were good, so he left with the Augusta County militia on March 17 for Jackson's camp. Soon after he arrived, Hotchkiss was sent on a preliminary reconnaissance of Woodstock and vicinity. He was accompanied by Lt. James Keith Boswell, Jackson's Chief of Engineers, who later became Hotchkiss's closest friend. On March 21 Hotchkiss received word that General Jackson would detail him for engineering duty and had important work for him.

At headquarters, General Jackson spoke the words that made Hotchkiss his topographical engineer: "I want you to make me a map of the Valley, from Harper's Ferry to Lexington, showing all the points of offense and defense in those places . . ." Lt. A. S. (Sandie) Pendleton detailed William Humphreys as Hotchkiss's assistant and secured a wagon and supplies for the reconnaissance. Thus was formed a partnership between general and engineer. The engineer could swiftly supply the general with accurate sketches and was always prepared to explain his maps. Before movements of the army, he was frequently called in to give advice on terrain, and was able to furnish graphic representations of any point on which Jackson was not clear. He used different colors for clarity in the definition of surface features.

During the Valley Campaign of 1862, Hotchkiss was engaged in reconnaissance and map making. He spent nearly a month in midsummer in Staunton drawing maps of the campaign. On July 15, he was ordered to meet Jackson at Gordonsville with full equipment, rejoining the Second Corps in time for the engagements at Second Manassas and for the Maryland invasion.

In December, Hotchkiss was again taken ill, but managed to spend most of January 1863 making detailed maps of the Battles of Kernstown and McDowell. On February 3 he was granted a short leave of absence. After his return, camp life was dreary as winter thawed into spring. April passed into May as a major engagement became imminent.

THE BROKEN CIRCLE

On May 2, 1863, a Federal force under Gen. Joseph Hooker fought the Battle of Chancellorsville against the Confederate units of Gens. Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. During the day the battle went well for the Confederates. By a flanking movement Jackson took his whole corps to Hooker's rear, and after hard fighting won the day. As night fell, the troops began to secure their positions. Jackson rode out with members of his staff on a personal reconnaissance. Just beyond Gen. A. P. Hill's position he learned from Federal prisoners that Hooker was throwing up obstacles to the advance. Wheeling at an

alarm signal, the little band of staff officers trotted back toward the safety of their own lines. When Jackson and his staff approached the positions of a North Carolina regiment they were mistaken for a Yankee cavalry charge and a nervous line of men opened fire. As Jackson held up his hands and ordered the men to cease firing, he was struck in the right hand and left arm. Jackson's runaway horse was caught by Capt. R. E. Wilbourn as the limp general fell from the saddle.

Hotchkiss arrived on the scene shortly after the firing and, seeing the fallen general, raced off for Dr. Hunter H. McGuire, Jackson's medical director and personal physician. Later Hotchkiss went to look for Boswell and found him by a side road, pierced through the heart by two rifle balls.

Hotchkiss was deeply affected by Boswell's death. Jackson still lived, and that helped for a while; but, having lost an arm, he had to be taken to the rear for recovery. Hotchkiss was aroused early on May 4 to select the route and lead the way to the home of Thomas Coleman Chandler near Guinea, where Jackson was to convalesce. He preceded the ambulance with a small party to clear the rocks from the road and to order the wagons out of the way. The party arrived at Chandler's about eight o'clock. Hotchkiss soon hurried back to headquarters to resume his topographical duties, and Jackson's last words assured him that he would soon be joining him. Within a week he was dead.

Shaken by the loss of Boswell and Jackson, Hotchkiss wrote to his wife that ". . . the charmed circle in which General Jackson and his staff moved is broken & the break is a heavy one."

Gen. A. P. Hill was appointed temporary commander of Jackson's corps. Shortly afterward, a general reorganization placed Gen. Richard S. Ewell in command of the Second Corps, and Gen. Jubal A. Early eventually replaced him. But Hotchkiss always missed Jackson: "I was in no great battle subsequent to Jackson's death in which I did not see the opportunity which, in my opinion, he would have seized, and have routed our opponents . . ."

GETTYSBURG TO THE END

Hotchkiss had scant time to reflect on his losses. He soon was busy preparing for Lee's second northern invasion. Hotchkiss traveled with the army as far north as Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where, taking over the Union barracks, the Confederates raised their own flag. As the army neared Gettysburg, Hotchkiss was engaged in reconnaissance for General Ewell. During the first day of the battle, Hotchkiss acted as a courier, but he was soon ordered to Seminary Ridge to observe the troops and to draw an accurate map of the battle. On July 4 he was up at two in the morning working on a map of the country that had to be crossed on the return to Virginia. On the retreat to the Potomac, he helped move the wagons and took careful notes on the terrain. On July 14 the army recrossed the river into Virginia.

In early September, the Rev. R. L. Dabney visited headquarters collecting information for a forthcoming biography of Jackson. Hotchkiss guided him over the battlefield at Cedar Run. He was pleased that Dabney was writing the biography, and apparently was already nurturing the ambition to write about Jackson himself.

In midsummer Hotchkiss was with Early on his raid on Washington. Penetrating to the suburbs of the Federal capital, the Confederates came to within 6 miles of the White House. Early had promised his men that he would take Washington, but the hot July sun and the dusty roads had taken their toll, and he was forced to retreat with only a moral victory.

guarded right wing. When the attack came, the Confederates were initially victorious, but they failed to follow up this advantage. Gordon blamed Early for the failure, while Early laid it to Gordon's lack of readiness. Hotchkiss was dispatched to General Lee with the news of the action, but he was instructed by Early not to mention the halted advance to the commander. After delivering the report to Lee, Hotchkiss went home for another visit.

Hotchkiss was highly esteemed among educators, soldiers, and engineers and in each of these areas this recognition was earned by hard work, and in no area did he deserve a higher reputation than in topographical engineering. As Stonewall Jackson's map maker his services to the Confederacy were ideally suited and well performed.

Sketch
of the
BATTLE
of
BELLE GROVE
CEDAR CREEK
Wednesday Oct^r 19th.
1864.

Scale 100 Yards

By John A. S. Phelps

The map illustrates the tactical positions during the battle. Key locations marked include Middletown (top right), Belle Grove (center), Cedar Creek (bottom center), and Strasburg (bottom left). Numerous individual soldiers and units are plotted as dots, often with names like 'J. Miller', 'Anderson', 'Hester', 'Belle Grove', 'S. Breckinridge', 'Anna Stickle', 'The Stickle', 'Capt. Bowman', 'C. J. Pate', 'Brammers Mill', 'Hatch', 'Col. Bowman', 'Dug House', 'Dug', 'Parks', 'Wm. Dwyer', 'Plagues', 'Farmer', 'J. Miller', 'Anderson', 'Hester', 'Belle Grove', 'S. Breckinridge', 'Anna Stickle', 'The Stickle', 'Capt. Bowman', 'C. J. Pate', 'Brammers Mill', 'Hatch', 'Col. Bowman', 'Dug House', 'Dug', 'Parks', 'Wm. Dwyer', 'Plagues', 'Farmer'. The map also shows the 'Cedar Creek' and 'Belle Grove' areas, as well as the 'Middletown' and 'Strasburg' locations. A scale bar indicates 100 yards, and a north arrow is present in the top left corner.